



ANNUAL REPORT 2019



Human
Rights
Center
(HRC)

ANNUAL REPORT 2019





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Aleko Tskitishvili,
Executive Director

On December 10, 2019 Human Rights Center turned 23 years old. It is a quite a good age for a human rights organization in Georgia that makes the HRC members feel more proud. At the same time, it obliges us to implement our projects and litigate cases in administrative bodies and/or common courts with more responsibility.

Human Rights Center operatively gets involved in all cases of grave human rights violations, where the state, as an institutional system, acts against a citizen and if the citizen is particularly vulnerable and unprotected. With it, the organization defends the rights not only of that particular person, but the interests of the entire society.



Throughout 2019, HRC lawyers worked on several strategic cases. The head of the legal aid service Nestan Londaridze defended the interests of the family of Davit Saralidze, teenage boy killed in the Khorava Street in Tbilisi. HRC was everywhere where the victim family needed support. Eventually, this case exposed so many problems and violations in the system of justice that entire civil society went on multi-thousand protest demonstrations to defend the interests of one person – the father and finally the chief





prosecutor resigned; temporary investigative commission was set up in the parliament of Georgia, which released significant conclusion over the Khorava Street Murder Case. As a result of human rights monitoring, HRC documents the facts of the human rights violation, the information is collected and finally reflected in special or/and annual reports. On the other hand, through free legal aid, the organization defends rights of concrete individuals, whose rights were breached by the state institutions.


HRC defends the legal interests of the family of Vitali Safarov, human rights defender, who was killed based on hate motive in Tbilisi. HRC believes that the astonishing murder of the human rights defender once again proved the existence of real threat for the society coming from the neo-Nazi/fascist groups. The threat is fostered by the lack of political will of the State to address the problem as well as inactivity of the State to clearly respond to the offensive activities and messages of the ultra-right extremist and nationalist groups.

For the past two years, HRC reinforced its work on strategic litigation. After all legal proceedings are over on the domestic level, HRC represents applicants in front of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). The organization assists the victims of 2008 August War and monitors ongoing investigation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) into Georgian situation.

Human Rights Center is the member of the International Coalition for ICC (CICC) and the Georgian Coalition for ICC (GCICC). In 2018-2019, HRC was chairing the Georgian Coalition for ICC.

HRC is the member of the Coalition for Independent and Transparent Judiciary that enables the organization to monitor the ongoing developments in the judiciary system together with partner organizations.





HRC pays particular attention to the analysis of the situation in the penitentiary system and defends the rights of prisoners. HRC lawyers are the experts of the National Preventive Mechanism of the Public Defender of Georgia and they systematically monitor the penitentiary establishments. At the same time, HRC continues the tradition of close cooperation between the Public Defender's Office and the HRC. In 2019, Human Rights Center published the report on the monitoring of the penitentiary establishments, which presents the monitoring results of the four penitentiary establishments of Georgia together with partner CSOs in the frame of the National Prevention Mechanism mandate of the PDO.

In 2020, HRC, as an experienced election observer organization, will monitor the parliamentary elections too.

HRC continues close cooperation with international partners – respectful organizations, coalitions and networks, like Norwegian Helsinki Committee, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Coalition for the ICC, Human Rights Houses Network, and more.

The activities of Human Rights Center are supported by various donor organizations. Increasing trust of the donors towards the organization gives us hope that the organization will further develop and achieve its future goals.





Nino Tsagareishvili,
Co-Director


One of the strategic working directions of Human Rights Center is fighting against the impunity for crimes committed during the 2008 August War. Human Rights Center carries out this work with the financial support of Norwegian Helsinki Committee and Open Society Georgia Foundation.

12 years since the August War the crimes committed during the 2008 August War are still not investigated and no one has been brought to justice. It has been four years since the International Criminal Court started investigation over the crimes committed during the August War.

Human Rights Center is defending the interests of approximately 200 victims on national as well as international level, before the International Criminal Court and European Court of Human Rights.

Human Rights Center has been actively cooperating with different organs of International Criminal Court, including the Victims Participation and Reparations Section (VPRS) and Trust Fund for Victims. Human Rights Center provides information to the Court and its relevant organs regarding the current needs of the victims and the difficulties related to the investigation of the August War crimes. This work aims to promote effective investigation of the crimes committed during the 2008 August War and reveal the perpetrators, as well as improve the grave socio-economic state of the victims. Human Rights Center continues advocacy in this direction on national level as well.





During last three years, as a result of address of Human Rights Center, Office of Chief Prosecutor granted victim status to 49 individuals.

During 2019 Human Rights Center continued active advocacy regarding the human rights problems and challenges on international level.

On international level, the representatives of Human Rights Center participated in OSCE annual human dimension meeting, the annual session of Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe and Assembly of State Parties of International Criminal Court in the formats of meeting with NGOs. In these formats we highlighted the current needs of victims of 2008 August War to the international organizations and the challenges related to the investigation of the crimes committed during the 2008 August War, as well as grave human rights situation along the dividing lines of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the problems and barriers that various groups comes across in Georgia when realizing their right to assemblies and manifestation.

For years Human Rights Center actively cooperated with the international human rights organizations, including International Federation of Human Rights and Coalition for International Criminal Court, through providing the relevant information and reports, disseminating public statements and using other means of advocacy. The participation of the representatives of Human Rights Center in various trainings and working meetings organized by the international governmental and non-governmental organizations, including International Federation of Human Rights and OSCE Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, served strengthening the capacities of staff of Human Rights Center in this direction.



*Nino Tlashadze,
Deputy Executive Director*

I joined Human Rights Center in 2006 and I believe it was one of the best decisions I have made in my life. It is a huge opportunity to work in the team,


which is developing every year.

In the countries with young and fragile democracy human rights defenders permanently face challenges and difficulties. Neither 2019 was an easy year for the Georgian HRDs; and Human Rights Center was in the mid of this turmoil by documenting and advocating the observed human rights issues.

In order to be actively engaged in the developments, it is important to keep close partnership with international partners – human rights organizations and donors. We elaborate and release joint statements together with our international human rights partners to address the violations committed by the members of law enforcement structures, the facts of restricted freedom of expression and various facts of discrimination; on the other hand, we actively worked on fundraising because with the increased challenges and problems in the country, the organization really needs additional human and financial resources.

HRC, more than fifteen years, has been providing citizens with free legal aid; the organization not only assists them in the restoration of their breached rights, but through strategic litigation and advocacy, tries to address: legislative miscarriages, malicious practice of law enforcement system and identifies and advocates significant miscarriages in the judiciary system.





HRC, with the financial support of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), has been successfully implementing the program of free legal aid in the Tbilisi head office and two regional offices in Kakheti and Shida Kartli regions. Throughout the year, the team of five lawyers issued legal consultations to thousands of beneficiaries, represented hundred citizens in front of the domestic common courts, administrative bodies and also on the international level – ECtHR, ICC and UN Committees.

One of the main priorities of Human Rights Center is to educate young people in the field of human rights. It is important that the youth grew up with the democratic values and became active citizens. In order to achieve this goal, HRC implemented various projects on human rights education of the youth. In 2019, in Kakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions, with the financial support of the UNICEF and European Commission, HRC conducted series of trainings. The purpose of the trainings was to educate the adolescents with the WaSH [Water, Sanitary and Hygiene] related human rights and also, if these rights are violated, to equip them with sufficient skills to plan and implement successful advocacy campaigns. It is particularly important that the participants of the trainings already launched various campaigns and became civil activists in their communities; they, together with their friends, fight to resolve the problems of the polluted drinking water, demolished drainage systems and poor infrastructure.

Considering the successful litigation and advocacy cases in 2019, we can evaluate the year as fruitful and important period for Human Rights Center. We, together with the international partners, with the support of donor organizations, continue our work for the better future of our country and with the implementation of the old and new initiatives, we continue our fight for the better respect of human rights, rule of law and with the belief that everybody is equal.



ZONE OF BARBED WIRES

Ucha Nanuashvili,
Project Director

Norwegian Helsinki Committee has been strategic partner and donor of Human Rights Center for many years. The NHC worked on many significant issues and

promoted defense of the human rights in the region.

In 2019, with the support of NHC, Human Rights Center continued monitoring, study and advocacy of the state of human rights in the conflict-affected regions of Georgia.

Throughout the year, so-called borderization continued alongside the dividing line of South Ossetia, as a result of what many locals lost access to their agricultural plots. In some cases, they even lost access to their houses, after they turned up on the other side of the division line marked by the so-called “border signs.”



The borderization violates the rights to property, freedom of movement and right to personal inviolability, which are guaranteed by the international human rights conventions.

In September 2019, after the crossing points were closed connecting the occupied Akhalkalaki district with the rest of Georgia, the humanitarian crisis lasted in the district for several months and it still progresses.



In 2019, Georgian young man died in an obscure situation in the Russian military base. This incident, like other facts of murder/death alongside the division line or nearby in the previous years, was not investigated and perpetrators were not punished yet.

With the support of NHC, Human Rights Center published special report “Zone of Barbed Wires – Mass Human Rights Violations along the Dividing Lines of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.”

The report reviews mass human rights violations alongside the division lines of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, including the facts of unlawful restriction of freedom, treatment of arbitrarily arrested individuals, the facts of restricted rights to movement and education.

ICC INVESTIGATION EFFECT

On May 15, 2019, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) and Norwegian Helsinki Committee organized the discussion on the following topic - “What is the effect of the investigation of Russia-Georgia armed conflict by the International Criminal Court.”

Ucha Nanuashvili - Project Director at Human Rights Center, Anastasia Zakharova – lawyer at the Russian Justice Initiative and Aage Borchgrevink





– representative of the Norwegian Helsinki Committee were the speakers during the discussion. They spoke about the ongoing investigation of the ICC. HRC representative presented the report “Zone of Barbed Wires.”

The speakers answered the questions of the audience – how effective the work of the ICC and the European Court of Human Rights in connection with the armed conflicts is? Are there hopes and expectations that the syndrome of impunity will end in the region? What impact the investigation may have and what results we may expect from it?

ROUND TABLE ORGANIZED BY THE COE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONAIRE IN STRASBOURG

In June 2019, Deputy Executive Director Nino Tlashadze participated in the round table with human rights defenders on human rights issues in the conflict-affected and disputed territories organized by the office of the Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe.

The round table was organized in Strasbourg (France) in the CoE Youth Center. Representatives of the conflict-affected territories of the region, including Abkhazia and South Ossetia, took part in the discussion. Nino Tlashadze spoke about the state of human rights defenders and the facts of human rights violations in the occupied Akhalkalaki and Gali districts.





KREMLIN COMEBACK – RUSSIAN AGGRESSION IN GEORGIA AND UKRAINE

On June 24, 2019, at The Palace of Europe, Strasbourg during the summer session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), International Partnership for Human Rights(IPHR) in cooperation with partner organisations has organized a side-event "Kremlin comeback is a threat to Council of Europe and European security: widespread, systematic and ongoing violations of the rights protected by the European Convention, resulting from Russia's aggression in Georgia and Ukraine".

The event was hosted by Egidijus Vareikis, Deputy Head of Lithuanian delegation, and Borianna Åberg, Chairperson of the Sweden Delegation. The speakers were human rights defenders from Crimea, Ukraine and Russia; Ucha Nanuashvili, Project Director at Human Rights Center and the former Public Defender of Georgia spoke about the situation in Georgia.

In the light of the forthcoming voting in PACE for lifting the sanctions against Russian Federation, human rights organizations and initiatives of PACE region has reminded the delegates about grave human rights violations, related to Russian aggressive actions, which seem to be approved and encouraged by one of the key human rights institutions worldwide.

Representatives of the NGOs participating in the meeting believed that sanctions constitute an essential tool for de-legitimising Russia's illegal actions against Ukraine and for preventing the further spread of the conflict.

HRC Project Director Ucha Nanuashvili spoke about the situation of 2008 victims, consequences of the war and current situation in the conflict affected regions.





FIDH CONGRESS

On October 21-25, 2019, the 40th congress of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) was held in Taipei, Taiwan. During the congress, HRC representative Ucha Nanuashvili spoke about the ongoing ICC investigation into the Russian-Georgian war and the challenges the Court faces in the course of the investigation. During the congress, many important meetings were organized with the representatives of FIDH member organizations from across the world.

FIDH was founded in 1922 and is the first international human rights organizations. FIDH unites 184 member organizations from 112 countries. The Federation has been monitoring the facts of human rights violations and documents them throughout the world. HRC has been the member of the FIDH since 2004.

BLACK SEA REGION NGO FORUM

HRC has been actively participating in the Black Sea Region NGO Forum annually. The Forum aims to bring representatives of the nongovernmental organizations from the Black Sea Region and enable them to exchange their experiences in the frame of various thematic working groups, to plan and implement future joint projects and programs. As a rule, one session is dedicated to the meeting with the representatives of the donor organization operating in the region.

On October 23-25, 2019 the Black Sea NGO Forum took place in Istanbul, Turkey. HRC Deputy Executive Director Nino Tlashadze was one of the initiators to create human rights working group. She participated in the elaboration of the working group strategy. Nino Tlashadze, together with the head of the Georgian NGO Partnership for Human Rights Ana Abashidze, presented the strategy document to the forum participants on October 24. On October 25, Nino Tlashadze met representatives of the European Commission, EED, Black Sea Trust and NED.



ASSEMBLY OF STATE PARTIES OF THE ICC

HRC representatives actively participate in the annual Assemblies of the State Parties of the ICC (ASP).

On December 2-7, 2019, on behalf of Human Rights Center and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), HRC Deputy Executive Director Nino Tlashadze participated in the ASP and attended sessions and parallel meetings organized in the frame of the Assembly. She also actively participated in the discussion organized by the Trust Fund for Victims and the parallel session organized by the GCICC, where the report prepared by the Georgian Coalition was presented.





EASTERN PARTNERSHIP CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

On December 4-6, HRC participated in the 11th Assembly of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum in Brussels, Belgium. Panel discussions, meetings of the working groups, networking activities and presentations were organized in the frame of the Forum.

During the Forum, participants held action in front of the European Parliament in support of the Georgian doctor Vazha Gaprindashvili, who was arbitrarily detained by the Tskhinvali de-facto authority for illegal crossing of the so-called border. Georgian CSO representatives requested the European institutions to actively engage in the process of the immediate release of the arbitrary detainee.

OSCE/ODIHR EXPERT WORKSHOP ON ASSEMBLIES AND MANIFESTATIONS

On July 8-9, 2019, expert workshop on the issues of assemblies and manifestations was held in Vienna, Austria, with the participation of up to 25 representatives of civil society from various countries. The workshop was organized by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Co-director of Human Rights Center, Nino Tsagareishvili participated in the workshop. She drew attention to those problems and barriers which impede various groups in Georgia to realize their right to peaceful assembly and manifestation, including the violations observed at June 20, 2019 protest action and the subsequent events. The problems and restrictions faced by the LGBT community in Georgia which undermine their right to peaceful assembly and manifestation were also underlined at the workshop.



OSCE/ODIHR LONG TERM OBSERVER TRAINING

On 2-6 December 2019, Co-director of Human Rights Center, Nino Tsagareishvili participated in the training organized by the OSCE/ODIHR for long-term election observers in Belgrade, Serbia. The training covered issues such as commitments and standards of OSCE/ODIHR observation mission, as well as existing challenges, in terms of organizing the mission, the role of observers in the electoral process and principles of teamwork, code of conduct, media relations and reporting. During the training, case studies and lessons learned were also discussed.

OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING



In September 2019, at Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, Co-director of Human Rights Center, Nino Tsagareishvili made a speech regarding the realisation of right to assemblies and manifestations in Georgia. Among other issues, she drew attention to the use of disproportionate and excessive force by the state against the protestors when dispersing the action on June 20-21, 2019 held in front of the Parliament building in Tbilisi, Georgia. She also talked about those barriers and difficulties which different groups, including minorities, LGBTQI and other

groups come across in Georgia when realising their right to assemblies and manifestations.



LEGAL AID

*Nestan Londaridze,
Head of the Legal Aid*

I joined Human Rights Center in 2007. In 2019, I was selected to the position of the head of the legal aid service in the organization. My main duties are: to


issue personal and phone consultations, to provide beneficiaries with legal advocacy, to identify the priorities of the work of the legal aid team and coordinate their work.

According to the vision of the Human Rights Center, everyone is entitled to exercise her/his civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights freely and without any discrimination as guaranteed by national and international law. We consider that protection and promotion of these rights and respect for rule of law are the key preconditions for building sustainable peace and democracy in Georgia.

To achieve these goals, HRC, alongside with other activities, offers free legal aid to the beneficiaries to protect their rights on the local and international levels.



In 2019, in the frame of the free legal aid program, HRC was actively engaged in various high profile cases: the teenage murder case in Khorava street in Tbilisi, the case of the human rights defender Vitaly Safarov, ruthlessly killed in Tbilisi on September 30, 2018, the case of physical assault on civil activist Ana Subeliani, the cases of the journalists injured during the June 20 protest demonstration, and more.



One of the directions of the HRC activities is to assist the victims of various violations to get reimbursement for the received harm. HRC actively worked on the cases of the victims of torture and inhuman treatment in the penitentiary establishments. The particular problem is to grant victim status to the sufferers in the course of legal proceedings and to remedy them.

According to the Constitution of Georgia, right to peaceful assembly and manifestation is fundamental rights but in practice we see that these rights are often violated based on the Administrative Offences Code of Georgia. Law enforcement bodies still actively apply to the Articles 166 and 173 of the soviet time Administrative Offences Code of Georgia against the peaceful demonstration.

2019 STATISTICS OF THE LEGAL AID SERVICE IN THE HRC TBILISI OFFICE

Free legal consultations	2213
The cases processed in 2019	70 (common courts, prosecutor's office, administrative bodies)
Successfully litigated cases	40
Visits in penitentiary establishments	48





Shida Kartli office of Human Rights Center is composed of a lawyer, a journalist and an intern-lawyer.

Alexsi Merebashvili
Coordinator of the HRC
Shida Kartli office

Most problems the citizens apply to us for help are: social disputes, penalties issued by patrol police, unlawful activities of the police, problems of the people living alongside the dividing line, the problems of the IDPs and conflict affected population, problems related with the registration of property, family disputes, domestic violence cases, labor disputes with the public institutions and loans with financial companies or private creditors. We try to assist everybody but due to limited resources we cannot get involved in all cases. However, we issue legal consultations to all

beneficiaries.

In 2019, it was difficult to fight against the unlawful activities of the law enforcement bodies. Case of Kakha Tsavelidze is a good example of this problem, where we observe the interests of the law enforcement body to punish the defendant without adequate evidence in the case. Another case is interference in the professional activities of the journalist Saba Tsitsikashvili by police officers, though neither prosecutor's office nor the General Inspection of the MIA identified the fact of the interference in the professional activities of the journalist in it.

Case of Ilia Beruashvili was one of the successfully litigated cases of the HRC Shida Kartli office. National Agency on Public Registry refused him to register the land claiming that it was located on the occupied territory. In the contrary to that, HRC Shida Kartli office processed the case of Gocha Khubuluri,



who had a dispute over the land which is located in the occupied territory but the Georgian authority sequestered it and obliged Khubuluri to pay the property tax for it. The state had absolutely controversial approach to these two cases and violated the human rights in both of them.

The cases of Khidistavi village in Gori municipality and Ruisi village in Kareli municipality are worth to mention separately. In the first case, HRC Shida Kartli office found out that responsible body did not provide the local population with the true information about the quality of the drinking water they were supplied with; and in the second case, through the court litigation, HRC Shida Kartli office halted unlawful privatization of the sport ground in Ruisi village.

Considering the successfully litigated cases and other ongoing disputes, operation of the HRC in the region is important and necessary. The organization received many appreciations for its activities in the region. For example, EU Monitoring Mission, whose representatives positively evaluated the work of the office in Shida Kartli. Often, citizens cannot afford to defend their rights. The need of free legal aid is particularly urgent when citizens have conflicts with the central/local governmental bodies or strong financial or private companies. Therefore it is necessary to keep Human Rights Center – a strong ally of citizens in the region as a remedy for the protection of their rights.

SHIDA KARTLI OFFICE

Free legal consultations	1693
New cases processed in 2019	24
Successfully litigated cases	18
Visits in penitentiary establishments	5





Citizens apply to HRC Kakheti office on various issues: administrative, criminal, civil and other disputes. They receive comprehensive and professional consultations from the lawyers. However, because of the limited resources, the lawyer of the regional office represent beneficiaries in common courts only in the cases where the state bodies violate the rights of citizens. Also, the organization defends the victims of domestic, gender based violence or the crimes committed on gender, ethnic and/or religious grounds.

Tamar Modebadze
Coordinator of the HRC
Kakheti office


HRC Gurjaani office lawyer, as a member of the local gender council, often meets pupils of the local public schools and discusses the issues of domestic violence, gender-based violence and bullying with them.

The crimes committed by the law enforcement officers through the abuse of office power is significant problem. The organization defends the situations whose rights were breached by the public registry or ministry of economics. As a rule, court disputes last long that often causes discontent, frustration and demotivation of the victims.

HRC in Kakheti region defends the rights of the former employees of the municipality city halls in the administrative bodies and courts.

Besides legal aid program, HRC office in Gurjaani implements the project in partnership with the CENN with financial support of the European Commission. The project aims to study the WaSH related human rights issues in the region and to advocate them.





As a result of HRC Kakheti office, in 2019 two public schools, one kindergarten and one outpatients were rehabilitated. In one village new outpatients' building was constructed.

HRC is the only nongovernmental organization in Gurjaani municipality, which provides the citizens with free legal aid not only in Gurjaani but in the entire Kakheti region.

HRC KAKHETI OFFICE	
Free legal consultations	360
The new cases processed in 2019	27
Successfully litigated cases	8





For years, the HRC lawyers defend legal interests of the prisoners in various institutions.

The convicted people contact the lawyers over the phone or send letters to the organization. Having studied the specific needs of the applicants and gravity of their problems, the lawyers meet prisoners in penitentiary establishments to plan advocacy of their cases. With the legal aid provided by the HRC lawyers many prisoners received adequate medical aid and improved the state of their rights in the penitentiary establishments.

In 2019, the HRC representatives visited many prisoners in the penitentiary establishments. The analysis of the problems revealed that the state of human rights and their access to adequate medical aid are still a

challenge.

*Eka Kobesashvili,
Lawyer, NPM Expert*

HRC has good experience of the monitoring of penitentiary establishments. HRC members, under the National Preventive Mechanism Mandate of the Public Defender of Georgia, study the state of the inmates on the place.

In 2019, HRC, together with the nongovernmental organizations “Penal Reform International” and “Initiative for Rehabilitation of Vulnerable Groups” within the frameworks of the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) under Office of Public Defender of Georgia, visited Kutaisi N2, Batumi N3, Rustavi N16 and Rustavi N17 penitentiary establishments on following issues – risk assessment and classification,



disciplinary responsibility, rehabilitation and re-socialization of prisoners, working conditions of prison personnel.

Human Rights Center continues protection of the prisoners' rights and currently implements the project for the protection of the rights of juveniles, who are in conflict with the law. One of the main components of the project is to monitor the rehabilitation facilities for juveniles.

Dimitri Nozadze,
Lawyer



Foreign citizens often apply to Human Rights Center for legal aid. They need assistance in the

preparation of lawsuits or complaints and defend their interests in the common courts. We also assist them to obtain labor and study permits in Georgia. The citizens of foreign countries often apply to us for help when they or their family members are not allowed to enter the Georgian territory. Often people need support to get a shelter and refugee status in Georgia. Mostly, these people come from Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Ghana, Nigeria, Azerbaijan and Russian Federation.

Foreign citizens apply to the Public Service Hall to get labor or study permits. The House of Justice, often, denies them to issue similar permits based on the notifications of the State Security Service and the Article 18 of the Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Foreigners, which states that these applicants create threat to the statehood and public order of the country. However, the letters do not clarify what kind of threats the applicants may create because the applicants are not allowed to get acquainted with the abovementioned letters. Only a judge and the Public





Defender are authorized to read the letter. The judges close the hearings to read the letters. The court judgments may be appealed in the Appellate Court and the decision of the appellate court is final.

Human Rights Center defends legal interests of an English language teacher, who is a citizen of Nigeria and has been living in Georgia for 7 years. In 2018, she repeatedly applied to the House of Justice to extend the term of her labor permit but they refused. With the HRC legal aid, the English language teacher appealed the answer of the House of Justice in the Tbilisi City Court and then in the Appellate Court, which has not scheduled the trial for two years already.

Often, foreign citizen has a visa and can legally enter the territory of Georgia but border officer refuses him/her to enter. The officer clarifies the denial based on the Article 11 of the Law of Georgia on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens, which applies to “other circumstances regulated under the law.” However it is unclear what kind of circumstances are meant under this provision. The MIA never clarifies its refusal, which is initially appealed in the MIA and then in the city court.

Foreign citizens often apply to the Migration Department of the MIA for shelter or refugee status. The Ministry mostly refuses them to grant an asylum seeker and refugee status. The refusal may be appealed in the court.

Usually, the MIA’s refusal is ungrounded and standard; the Ministry does not study the cases individually. Often, the city and appellate courts annul the MIA’s refusals and send back the applications to the Ministry for revision; the Court also indicates at the violations and evidence in its judgment, which were not considered by the Ministry when making negative decision over the status. Unfortunately, regardless the court judgments, the MIA still refuses the applicants to grant either status for what the foreign citizen needs to re-appeal the court.



Lazare Jibladze
Legal Analyst



My current position in Human Rights Center unites the tasks of the human rights lawyer and legal analyst.

Since 2019, we started preparation of analytic documents on significant and problematic issues. My first analytic document was legal analysis of the ongoing legal proceedings over the murder case of human rights defender Vitali Safarov and miscarriages identified by the organization.

The next analytic document analyzed the dispersal of June 20-21, 2019 protest demonstration, which assesses the actions of all parties including the authority and other actors. The document chronologically described the developments of the day and particular attention was paid to all important legal aspects. The report presents the position and recommendations of the organization. The HRC analytic document on June 20-21 events was referred to by the US State Department in its 2019 Report on the Practices of Human Rights, which was published on March 11, 2020.

The HRC echoed the scandalous pardon acts of the President of Georgia with analytic document, which attracted public attention. The document analyzes the regulation of this issue both in accordance to the Georgian and international law; delivers the recommendations for the problem solution and prevention.

HRC defends legal interests of Lasha Tordia, former auditor general of Georgia, who has victim status in the criminal case. The case refers to the physical assault on him by the former chief prosecutor of Georgia Otar Partskhaladze and the former deputy head of the investigative department of the Ministry of Finances





Mikheil Chokheli. HRC prepared the analytic document about the case, which analyzes all stages of the criminal proceedings and identified miscarriages in this process.

We actively echoed all ongoing developments in the country with the statements and urgent appeals. We reinforced our activities in the direction of the legislative body through the advocacy of important legislative amendments, which aim to introduce necessary changes in relation with labor safety and criminal legislation, the judiciary reforms and other significant issues.


We actively cooperate with the Coalition for Equality and member organizations. We work on the alternative reports (UPR) for the UN treaty bodies as well as for the CEDAW.

At the same time, together with the partner civil society organization Union Safari we continue communication with the CEDAW with regard to the so-called crimes of honor in accordance to the selective protocol.

In the end of 2019, we published the report – “State of Human Rights in Georgia, 2019”, which assesses the events developed in Georgia throughout 2019 in the legal context.



*Lana Giorgidze,
Editor-in-chief of Humanrights.ge,
PR-Manager*

 Humanrights.ge is a webpage about human rights, which was updated 250 times in 2019. Among them, 125 publications

were articles, 37 news, 88 appeals/press-releases. In total, in 2019, humanrights.ge had 75 500 viewers. The blog of the HRC legal analyst “Gorashvili vs Natchkebia” had the most viewers of all publications.

Humanrights.ge is the best platform for the documenting and recording the statements, reports of human rights organizations and generally the facts of human rights in Georgia.

Every individual is the main value and starting point for us!



Besides writing about human rights issues and editing the articles, I am permanently engaged in the daily activities of the organization. We in team seek the best ways for the solution of problems and for that purpose organized several protest demonstrations to request justice in front of the appellate court, on the Tbilisi Sea or elsewhere, where people face threat of having their rights violated. Above that, we participated in the actions organized by the coalitions of human rights CSOs.

In 2019 we held 10 press-conferences on various resonant cases and problematic issues. We published 88 appeals/press-releases on humanrights.ge.

Besides press-conferences, we screened a documentary film on the abuse of power by law enforcement officers; we presented the report on the State of Human Rights 2018 in Georgia; held round tables and






meetings with partner organizations, donors and beneficiaries. In 2019, Human Rights Center published 11 special reports on various issues of human rights, violations and high profile cases.

We are always ready to provide the society with the information about each of our activities. Besides that, we disseminate our appeals or press-releases via email lists and publish them on our Facebook and Twitter pages.

Regardless the abovementioned statistic data, the figures cannot tell everything about the 23-years-old human rights organization, which with not a very large human or financial resources, tries to improve the state of human rights and rule of law in the country.

CAMPAIGN “SWIM SAFE”





With the initiative of Human Rights Center, Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN), Ana Dolidze and Progress Center, the campaign “Swim Safe” has been in progress since 2018. The Campaign will unify civil society organizations and civil activists and will fight against mortality of citizens in the water bodies in Georgia. The Campaign aims to increase government’s responsibility and raise public awareness.

In Georgia, during summer seasons, tens citizens die in the sea, artificial water reservoirs, lakes and rivers every year. Artificially arranged recreation zones in the water bodies are the problem, where service of rescue teams is not provided and citizens are not protected. The places, where swimming is prohibited, are particularly dangerous but the state and private companies do not keep those sites adequately protected with solid barriers and often there are no warning banners either.

The Campaign initiators held several warning, information and protest actions in Tbilisi and various citizens. They met the leaders of the cities and public servants, school students. Together with the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum National Platform of Georgia, the Campaign advocated the legislative amendments with the parliament and government members. The report and policy document were developed with respective recommendations.

Campaign “Swim Safe” calls on the Government of Georgia to take concrete steps to improve the legislation and to ensure safety of citizens in the water bodies.



OUR STAFF





MISSION STATEMENT

The **Human Rights Center** (HRC) was founded on December 10, 1996 in Tbilisi, Georgia. The **HRC** is dedicated to protection and promotion of human rights, rule of law and peace in Georgia.

VISION

The Human Rights Center believes that everyone is entitled to exercise her/his civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights freely and without any discrimination as guaranteed by national and international law. We consider that protection and promotion of these rights and respect for rule of law are the key preconditions for building sustainable peace and democracy in Georgia.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

The HRC aims to increase respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and facilitate peacebuilding process in Georgia. To achieve this goal it is essential to ensure that authorities respect the rule of law and principles of transparency and separation of powers, to eliminate discrimination at all levels, increase awareness and respect for human rights among the people in Georgia.

HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER'S PRIORITY AREAS

Strengthening the rule of law by:

- ✚ Supporting harmonization of national legislation with international human rights standards and monitoring their implementation;
- ✚ Raising public awareness about their rights and available legal remedies/mechanisms for their realisation;





- ✦ Providing free legal aid to individuals and groups to defend their rights and freedoms at national and regional/international levels;
- ✦ Monitoring, documenting and reporting on human rights violations.
Supporting Freedom of Expression and Media by:
- ✦ Supporting development of independent media;
- ✦ Promoting creation of environment conducive of free expression;
- ✦ Capacity building of journalists and media representatives;
- ✦ Promotion and development of new media.
Promoting Equality and Social Inclusion by
- ✦ Fighting against discrimination;
- ✦ Protecting the rights of minorities and other vulnerable groups;
- ✦ Promoting gender equality and women empowerment.
Supporting Transitional Justice by:
- ✦ Documenting and reporting human rights violations committed in relation with armed conflicts;
- ✦ Promoting accountability for human rights violations;
- ✦ Advocating restitution and reparation;
- ✦ Confidence building, reconciliation and peace building.
Reinforcement of Democratic processes by:
- ✦ Strengthening development of civil society organizations through capacity building and networking;
- ✦ Encouraging involvement of social groups in public activities;
- ✦ Promoting free and fair elections, good governance and transparency.





ACTIVITIES:

- ✚ **Monitoring and Documenting** human rights violations in Georgia;
- ✚ **Reporting** on human rights situation in Georgia to the EU, Council of Europe, OSCE, UN, ICC and others international bodies on regular basis;
- ✚ **Lobbying and Advocacy** of legislative and policy reforms before national and international institutions;
- ✚ **Litigating** cases on human rights violations through Legal Aid Centre free of charge;
- ✚ **Public Awareness Raising** on human rights situation in Georgia by daily-updatable bi-lingual online magazine www.HumanRights.ge and video-portal www.hridc.tv
- ✚ **Networking** among human rights organizations on national and regional level.

DIFFERENT INITIATIVES

THE SOUTH CAUCASUS NETWORK OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

- ✚ The South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders (www.caucasusnetwork.org) unites 30 human rights NGOs in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The Network seeks to facilitate the creation of a safer and enabling environment for human rights defenders in the South Caucasus and to strengthen their voices in the region and internationally. The Network offers legal, psychological, medical and financial support to human rights defenders at risk; monitors policy, legal and security environment affecting defenders/NGOs and their work as well as human rights and freedoms in general and provides a regional platform for joint lobbying before national and international institutions.





SORRY CAMPAIGN

Sorry campaign (www.apsni.org) was initiated in March 2007. The aim of the Sorry Campaign is to change the dynamics and direction of the relationships that have been established between Georgians and Abkhazians during recent years. The Sorry Campaign is not in any way connected with politics; it is a movement that is against war, as the organisation considers that there is no alternative to peaceful dialogue and mutual settlement of the conflict. The Campaign envisages the reestablishment of confidence between Georgian and Abkhazian people and to break through the informational vacuum. We want to encourage people to think about the horrors of war and the mistakes that have been made.

THE HUMAN RIGHTS HOUSE

The Human Rights House Tbilisi (www.humanrightshouse.org) was formally accepted by the Human Rights House Network in October 2009. By being the member of such a global network, Georgian civil society organizations will be in a position to advocate and lobby with greater degree of impact as well as to exchange knowledge, skills and experience with fellow NGOs from other countries. The House in Tbilisi serve as a contribution to enhance the respect for human rights in Georgia, support the work of the human rights defenders in the country and be a focal point of human rights organisations in Georgia and the region.





THE COALITION FOR TRUST

The Coalition (www.coalitionfortrust.org) was established in June 2015 by a number of representatives of non-governmental organizations from the South Caucasus and Norway. The coalition resulted from three years of work done in the framework of an EU sponsored program, run by the Norwegian Helsinki Committee in cooperation with Coalition members, with the aim of establishing a coalition for trust. The Coalition has been registered as an international association in September 2015 in Oslo, Norway. It is built on a regional approach, fostering cooperation and partnership.

THE GEORGIAN COALITION FOR INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (GCICC)

Human Rights Center is the head of Georgian Coalition for International Criminal Court (www.gcicc.ge) which aims to protect the interests of victims of crimes within the jurisdiction of ICC, represent their interests both on national as well as on international level, increase public awareness regarding the ICC and promote conflict prevention, peaceful resolution and trust building processes. Following are the member organizations of GCICC: International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), Human Rights Center(HRC), Georgian Young Lawyers Association(GYLA), Human Rights Priority, Union “21 Century”, “Article 42 of Constitution”, Center for Protection of Constitutional Rights(CCPR), Justice International and Georgian Center for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture(GCRT).





HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER IS MEMBER OF THE FOLLOWING INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS:

- ✚ International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) www.fidh.org
- ✚ World Organization Against Torture (SOS-Torture OMCT Network); www.omct.org
- ✚ Human Rights House Network; www.humanrightshouse.org
- ✚ NGO Coalition for the International Criminal Court(CICC); www.coalitionfortheicc.org
- ✚ Human Rights Without Frontiers, Int.; www.hrwf.net
- ✚ International Peace Bureau (IPB); www.ipb.org
- ✚ UNITED for Intercultural Action – European Network against Nationalism, Racism, Fascism and Support of Migrants and Refugees; www.unitedagainstracism.org
- ✚ Child Rights Information Network (CRIN); www.crin.org

HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER HAS BEEN SUPPORTED BY THE FOLLOWING ORGANISATONS:

The European Commission; The Norwegian Helsinki Committee; National Endowment for Democracy (NED), The USA; Black Sea Trust of the German Marshal Fund of the United States; Cordaid (The Netherlands); Council of Europe; Embassy of Canada; Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF); UNICEF; The Swiss Embassy in Georgia; Embassy of Lithuania; CICC; Bulgarian Embassy in Georgia; East-West Management Institute/USAID; US Embassy in Georgia; Estonian Embassy in Georgia; IFES/USAID.



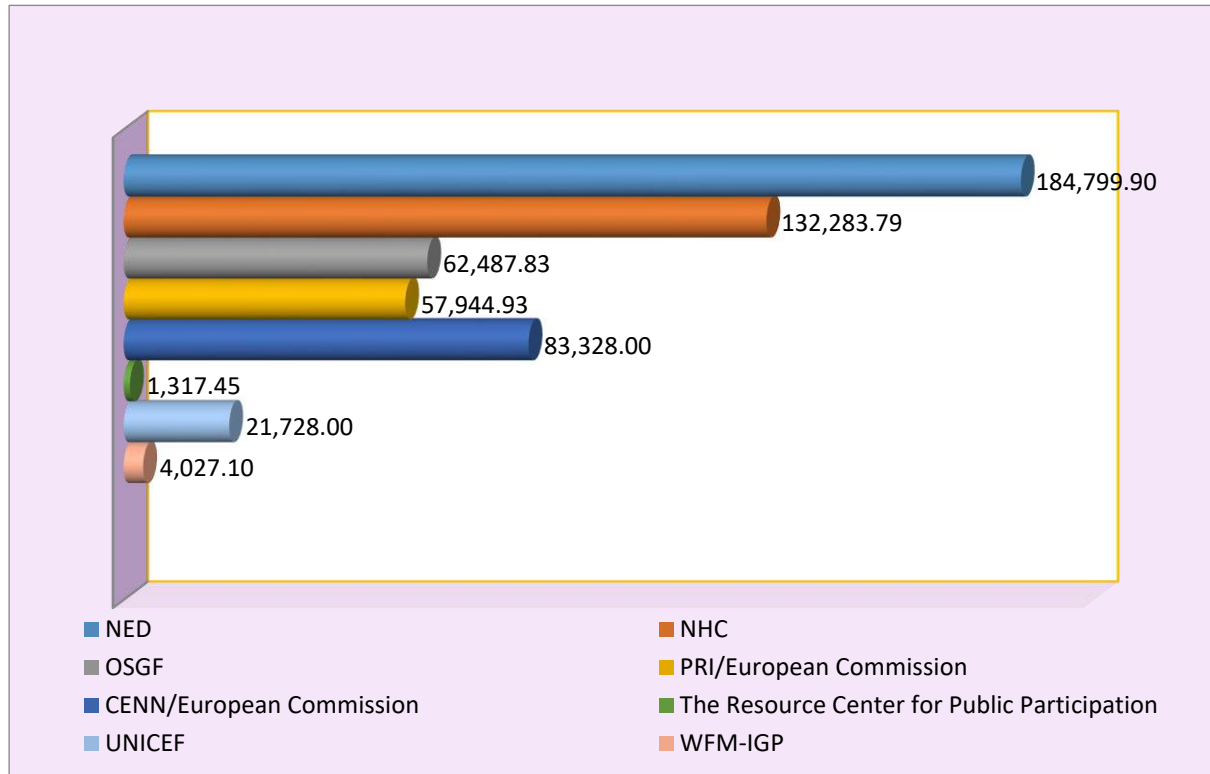
FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER, 2019

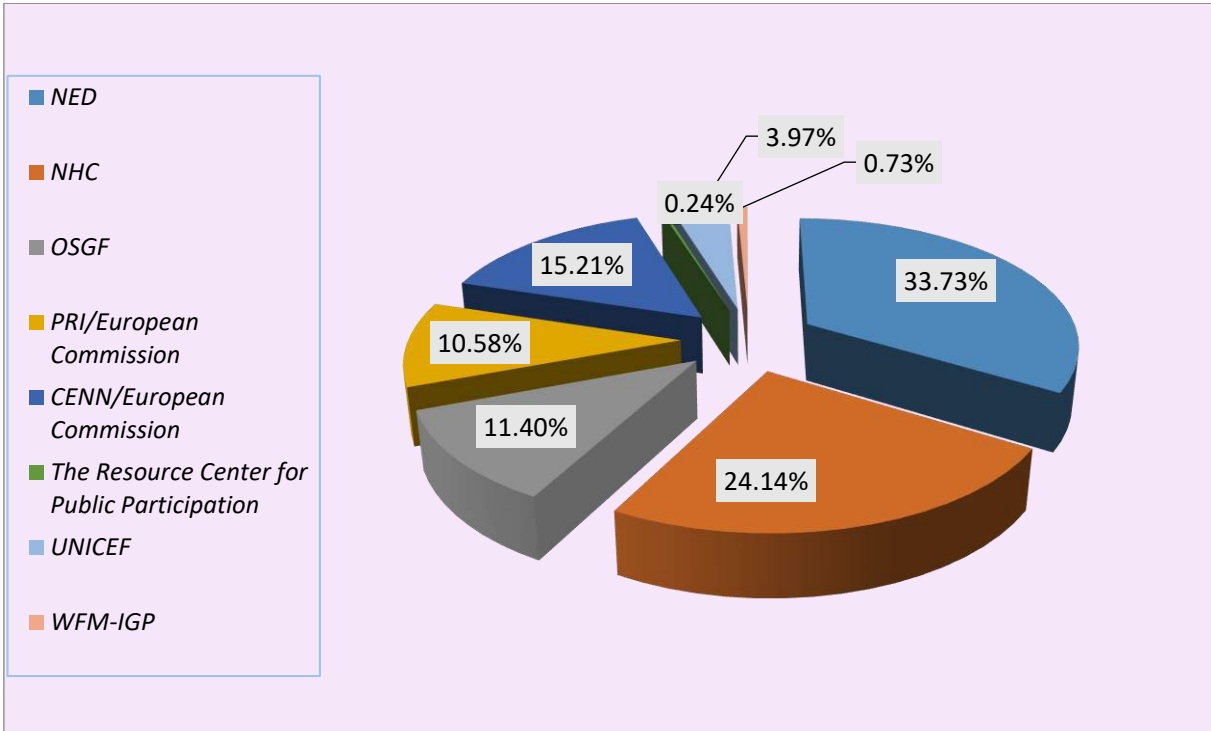
INCOME (GEL)	
National Endowment for Democracy (NED)	176,860.55
Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC)	138,082.82
Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF)	28,227.13
PRI/European Commission	56,210.10
CENN/European Commission	41,828
The Resource Center for Public Participation	1,210.19
UNICEF	26,217
The World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy (WFM-IGP)	13,230.46
Total Income	481,866.25

EXPENSES (GEL)	
National Endowment for Democracy (NED)	184,799.90
Norwegian Helsinki Committee (NHC)	132,283.79
Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF)	62,487.83
PRI/European Commission	57,944.93
CENN/European Commission	83,328
The Resource Center for Public Participation	1,317.45
UNICEF	21,728
The World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy (WFM-IGP)	4,027.10
Total Income	547,917.00



FOR THE REPORTING PERIOD 547,917 GEL WAS RECEIVED FROM DIFFERENT SOURCES





HRC IN PHOTOS

